DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 288 432 HE 020 906

AUTHOR McCauley, Lynne
TITLE The University Curriculum: A Freshman Year Program for Students Who Choose To Explore Academic and Career Options. Annual Report, 1986-87.
INSTITUTION Western Michigan Univ., Kalamazoo.
PUB DATE 87
NOTE 19p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Academic Advising; Ancillary School Services; *Career Choice; Career Planning; *College Students; College Transfer Students; Decision Making; Higher Education; Information Needs; *Majors (Students); Skill Development; *Student Development; *Student Evaluation
IDENTIFIERS *Western Michigan University

ABSTRACT

A program to serve beginning and transfer students at Western Michigan University who are undecided about their curriculum choice is described. The assessment, referral, and advising services are designed to address students' developmental as well as academic needs. Program activities during 1986-1987 are identified for the following program objectives: to administer recruitment communications and participate in recruitment activities; to provide program and academic information to students and parents at orientation; to connect students with the program services through written and other types of communication; to provide assessment and referral services to students; to provide academic advising; to provide courses suited to developmental needs of students; to provide academic skill-building courses and academic support services; to coordinate with the Honors College in providing guidance and enrichment services for students who scored high on the American College Testing Program examinations; to provide career planning service; and to provide development and support services for advising staff and to evaluate staff effectiveness. (SW)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED288432

The University Curriculum

A Freshman Year Program for Students Who Choose to Explore Academic and Career Options

Annual Report

1986-87

Lynne McCauley
Director

"PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

Lynne McCauley

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

HE 020 906

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

The University Curriculum at

Western Michigan University

A Freshman Year Program for Students

who Choose to Explore Academic and

Career Options Before Deciding on a Major

University curriculum was established at Western Michigan University in 1985 to serve students identified by the literature on retention as high-risk no matter their ability level: the undecided freshman.

This Document reports the services, activities, and evaluation of the program during its first official year of operation, 1986-1987. It begins with a goal statement, followed by a list of the ten objectives that guide the program. The body of the report describes each objective in some detail and lists the activities designed to achieve that objective.

Lynne McCauley, Ph.D.
Director

The University Curriculum

Goal Statement: To provide beginning and transfer students to Western Michigan University who are undecided about their curriculum choice with assessment, referral, and advising services designed to assist them select a college curriculum and major. The program is designed with a sensitivity to students' developmental as well as academic needs.

OBJECTIVES for 1986-87

1. To administer recruitment communications and participate in recruitment activities.
2. To provide UNV program and academic information to UNV students and parents at Orientation.
3. To connect enrolled students with the University Curriculum via written and other forms of communication.
4. To provide assessment and referral services to UNV students.
5. To provide academic advising to UNV students.
6. To provide courses suited to developmental needs of UNV students.
7. To provide academic skill-building courses and academic support services to UNV students.
8. To cooperate with the Honors College in providing guidance and enrichment services for high-ACT UNV students.

9. To provide career planning services.

10. To provide development and support services for staff advisers; to evaluate program services.

Appendices

A. Residence Hall Visits: Report

B. Group Information/Discussion Sessions: Report

C. Level of Academic Choice Instrument and Data

D. LINKS Program Report

E. Program Evaluation

OBJECTIVE 1: To administer recruitment communications and participate in recruitment activities.

The University Curriculum participates in WMU's recruitment efforts in several ways. We send letters to prospective students and to admitted students. These letters describe our services and attempt to relieve anxiety about being "undeclared" by stressing the excitement of "choosing to explore academic and career options before deciding on a major." UNV staff also participate in all on and off-campus recruitment activities such as Brown & Gold Day and Gold Pride receptions, as well as Western Fridays and other special group events. In addition to flyers and brochures, we distributed imprinted pens and bookmarks to help market the University Curriculum to prospective students.

Activities

* Letter mailed to all students who indicated WMU and "undecided" on ACT tape.
* Letter mailed to all students admitted to the University Curriculum.
* Spoke with 92 potential students and their parents during Western Friday visits.
* Participated in the Meet WMU Night for non-traditional students.
* Participated in Brown & Gold Day.
* Participated in Gold Pride Receptions and community college visits.
* Participated in football recruiting programs.
* Participated in Medallion Scholarship Program.
* Participated in the program for children of alumni.

* Met with students from the Franklin Wright Settlement.

* Developed new brochure describing the University Curriculum.

* Prepared University Curriculum pens and bookmarks.

OBJECTIVE 2: To provide UNV program and academic information to UNV students and parents at Orientation.

The fruits of our recuitment efforts are first apparent at Orientation, when admitted students often make their final decision to enroll at Western. University Curriculum staff participate in all appropriate phases of Orientation: introductory sessions with students, advising programs, registration, and parent sessions. Evaluations of our efforts, conducted by the Orientation office, indicate a high degree of satisfaction with our performance.

Activities

* Conducted introduction to advising sessions for UNV students.

* Conducted program planning sessions.

* Staffed advising and information table during registration.

* Spoke with parents at Parent Orientation.

OBJECTIVE 3: To connect enrolled students with the University Curriculum via written and other forms of communication.

The literature on retention reveals the importance of a student's feeling "Connected" to a part of the University as soon as possible after arriving. The University Curriculum reaches out

to its students in a number of ways especially during their first two months on campus. Letters of welcome were sent early in September; other letters, an ad in the Western Herald, and a Newsletter followed. We scheduled visits to residence halls and conducted group advising sessions, all in an effort to encourage students to make full use of our services. Full reports on these activities appear in appendices A and B.

Activities

* Visited nine residence halls to encourage our students to come in for preregistration advising.
* Conducted six group advising/discussion sessions to review degree requirements, University resources, and how to preregister.
* Placed advertisement of Fall 1986 advising schedule and important dates in the Western Herald in September.
* Mailed "welcome" letter and important advising dates flyer to all UNV students.
* Mailed letter to all enrolled UNV students on career assessment battery available at Testing Services.
* Mailed letter to all UNV athletes reminding them of NCAA regulation to meet with their adviser each semester.
* Mailed letter to all UNV juniors and seniors, reminding them that they are still listed as UNV and need to be making their academic major choice.

* Mailed letters to all UNV students in academic difficulty, reviewing their situation and informing them of the requirement to see their adviser.
* Mailed newsletter to all enrolled UNV students, Winter 1987.
* Mailed letters to all probation UNV students who returned to good standing (and those who remained on probation, but significantly improved their academic performance), congratulating them on that accomplishment.
* Each semester, mailed congratulations letters to all students who earned at least a 3.50 semester grade point average.
* Mailed congratulations letter to potential UNV students who are Medallion and Board of Trustees Scholarship winners.

OBJECTIVE 4: To provide assessment and referral services to UNV students.

In addition to the test battery administered by the Intellectual Skills Program, University Curriculum students are given a Level of Academic Choice Assessment, typically during Orientation. This instrument, developed by researching ACT literature on undeclared students, identifies the characteristics of each student's "undecidedness." High scores on certain questions reveal whether a student is 1) completely undecided 2) tentatively undecided, or 3) uncommitteed decided. Data for 1986 reveal that of the 479 students who were assessed during Orientation, 71.80% (344) were completely undecided; 14.8% (71) tentatively undecided; and 13.4% (64) were uncommitted decided. The Level of Choice instrument is typically placed in each

student's advising folder for reference by his/her adviser. This year, however Dr. Beverlee White, Counseling Center, has retained the tests for a research project. A copy of the instrument used in 1986 appears in Appendix C.

Referrals to other university services take place both on an individual and a general basis. Advisers refer students, as necessary, to the Academic Skills Center, Testing Services, the Counseling Center, Student Employment, Public Safety, and other units. All UNV students were encouraged, by letter, to take advantage of the Career Assessment Battery available at Testing Services. UNV staff worked with Laurence Berman and Gerald Novak of Testing Services, and with Dr. Alan Hovestadt of Counselor Education and Counseling Psychology, to pilot a program whereby practicum students from the counseling program were trained to interpret the career assessment battery. UNV students who took the battery were assigned to the trained graduate students for counseling. Although all parties concerned spent many hours in planning and training, the number of clients was not as large as we had hoped. Plans to continue this effort are uncertain.

Activities

* Administered Level of Academic Choice Assessment during freshman orientation.
* Reviewed UNV students' progress toward completion of ISDP requirements.
* As neccessary, referred UNV students to Academic Skills Center, Center, Counseling Center, Testing Services, and other programs.

* UNV students were strongly encouraged (by letter and in individual appointments) to take the career assessment battery through Testing Services.

OBJECTIVE 5: To provide academic advising to UNV students.

The provision of timely, accurate, and, of course personalized, academic advising services is one of the most important tasks of the University Curriculum. A trained corps of advisers saw students both by appointment and on a walk-in basis; students rarely had to wait longer than several days for an appointment, and walk-ins were never turned away, although they may have had to wait for a time.

To facilitate the advising process, and accurate record-keeping, UNV staff developed several new forms during the year. We also produced comb-bound booklets describing all General Education courses in an easy-to-follow format.

Other advising tasks performed by UNV staff included working with students on probation, often at one or two week intervals, to address the sources of their academic difficulties; conducting re-admission interviews; and conducting NCAA-required progress interviews.

In addition, our resource room is well-stocked with information from academic departments, financial aid, placement, registration, the Career Education Council and other important units.

To help insure that our services were meeting student needs, we conducted a time-utilization study during January, February, and March, 1987. We will use the results of that study in planning next year's service schedule, making sure that staff meetings, lunches, etc., do not conflict with peak student demand hours.

Activities

* Advisers had approximately 1,400 appointments scheduled this past year (1,381 to be exact). Of those appointments, 219 students were seen more than once, with some of those students having over ten appointments during the year. Since students were not required to have an appointment and, in fact, were encouraged to stop in to see their advisers, many additional students were served on a "walk-in" basis. During the month of April while advisers were keeping a tally of their appointments, walk-ins, and no-shows, walk-ins accounted for 21% of the student contacts. In reviewing appointment times, most students selected a a time between 10 am and 3 pm. Many students chose the lunch hour for their appointment. Wednesday through Friday were the days most frequently selected by students for their appointments.
* Visited nine residence halls to encourage our students to come in for preregistration advising.
* Conducted six group advising/discussion sessions to review degree requirements, University resources, and how to preregister.
* Revised advising forms.

* Developed general education booklet which includes course descriptions.
* Participated in transfer and freshmen orientations.
* Solicited catalogs from Michigan community colleges.
* Prepared calendar of events for UNV advising.
* Assigned probationary students to a specific adviser and reserved time slots for their required appointments.
* Conducted mid-semester progress reporting for UNV students on probation.
* Conducted re-admission interviews.
* Solicited academic information from all University programs.
* Arranged for registration information and materials to be available in our Resource Room.
* Secured posters and other career information for the Resource Room.
*Conducted student evaluation of our academic advising.

OBJECTIVE 6: To provide courses suited to developmental needs of UNV students.

UNV advisers pay close attention to our students' skills, interests, and abilities when discussing course and program selection. But two courses in particular are designed to assist the undeclared student in adjusting to college life and in making career and major decisions. They are UNV 101 and Arts & Sciences 100. The 101 course, piloted by Dr. Richard Oxhandler, Dianne Miller, and Moria Ebling, all from the Counseling Center, enrolled some 60 students in this, its second year of operation.

Students indicate a high degree of satisfaction with the course and Dr. Oxhandler's study of GPA indicates that "Expanding Perceptual Boundaries" may also influence academic success. Plans for the future of this "freshman success" course will be further developed during 1987-88.

Arts & Sciences 100, Career Exploration and Development, was offered in several sections during Winter 1987. Although open to all students, UNV students are strongly urged to enroll.

OBJECTIVE 7: To provide academic skill-building courses and academic support services to UNV students.

University Curriculum students are placed into skill-building courses as indicated by the Intellectual Skills program. The percentage of UNV students in need of remedial course work is close to that of the freshman class as a whole.

1986 Remedial Placements

	UNV N=500	All freshmen N=2,493
Reading	# Students	# Students
Fall	30 (6%)	128 (5%)
Winter	35 (7%)	155 (6%)
Total	65 (13%)	283 (12%)
Writing	49 (10%)	191 (8%)
Math	NA	618 (25%)

These data remind us that University Curriculum students resemble the freshman class as a whole in terms of their academic profile.

They are not significantly more, or less, prepared for college work. They need support as they take the time to explore their options.

The LINKS Program was designed to serve a special University Curriculum population: those testing at a reading level below the 10.5 grade. The program required students to enroll simultaneously in the remedial reading course, a "learning seminar" (PSY 397) and one of four designated general education courses offered by faculty who volunteered for the project. Results of the program, as measured by GPA were fair: 50% of the group earned a 2.00 after one semester. But data pointing to an ACT $\bar{<}$ 12 as an important variable for academic success at Western will be used to modify the remedial reading course, ED 104, next year. A full report on the 1986 LINKS project appears in Appendix E.

The full range of Academic Skills Center services were available to all University Curriculum students. All staff advisers referred students to the various programs as necessary and conducted follow-up activities when feasible. Students re-admitted to the University were required to attend ASC programs, or enroll in PSY 397, as necessary. Probationary students were typically encouraged to enroll in the Study Skills or Writing Lab programs. The Study Skills Program was presented in sections of PSY 397 to insure that these students participated.

Activities

* Developed LINKS Program.

* Arranged for Study Skills Program to be offered in sections of PSY 397-Self Management of Academic Behavior.

* Referred probation, re-admitted, and other students as necessary to Academic Skills Center.

* Programmed Orientation test results cards to indicate "Fall" placement for UNV students needing remedial writing; "Winter" placement for UNV students needing Math 109.

OBJECTIVE 8: To cooperate with the Honors College in providing guidance and enrichment services for high ACT UNV Students.

In addition to the activities designed to recognize UNV high-achievers, the UNV worked with the Assistant Director of the Honors College and members of the University Retention Committee to organize two programs to celebrate WMU's high achievers. The first was a reception for scholarship winners, held on September 30 in the Red Rooms. Dr. Susan Hannah spoke to the students, distributing and explaining the new 'Opportunities for Excellence' brochure. The second event was an "Opportunities for Excellence Fair," held on March 26 in the North Ballrooms. The new Honors College Director, Faith Gabelnick, was the featured speaker. After the address, students browsed among the many displays set up by student clubs, organizations and University units that offered opportunities for academic or social development as well as service. While attendance was good, we had hoped for a larger audience.

Activities

* Mailed congratulations letters to all UNV students achieving at least a 3.50 semester grade point average. These students were also highlighted in the newsletter.
* Mailed congratulations letters to potential UNV students who are Medallion and Board of Trustees Scholarship winners.

OBJECTIVE 9: To provide career planning services.

This function of the University Curriculum is carried out primarily by referral of students to career counselors at the Counseling Center, the Career Media Center, or to the Career Assessment Battery Test at Testing Services. The UNV also keeps the Resouce Room well stocked with bulletin board notices about careers, flyers from various academic departments, weekly Jobs newsletter and all other information received from Placements Services and the Career Education Council.

OBJECTIVE 10: To provide development and support services for advising staff; to evaluate staff effectiveness.

Current literature on academic advising, developmental psychology, working with undecided students, and other related topics, is circulated among staff advisers and remains available for reference in UNV offices.

At weekly meetings, staff reviewed current problems, revised forms, offered countless suggestions for improving our services. Training throughout the year focused on the following topics:

* use of information (ACT, ISDP, Placement tests, transcripts, credit evaluations, ACT information sheets, ISIS screens)
* interview skills
* study skills/learning theory and techniques
* development theory (e.g. Perry)
* legal aspects of advising
* university services and procedures
* job market information
* knowledge of special populations (undecided, minority, adult, athletes, honors, underprepared, probationary).

In addition, an evaluation of our advising services was conducted, the full report for which appears in Appendix F. Results show that positive responses increase as the number of contacts with an adviser increases. We intend to modify the evaluation instrument next year, send it out earlier to increase our response rate, and use it as a guide to expected performance for our staff advisers.

Miscellaneous:

The UNV director presented a paper to an audience of over 50 persons at The Freshman Year Experience Conference at the University of South Carolina, February 23-25, 1987. Title: The University Curriculum at Western Michigan University, or What to do for the Student Who Lists "Accounting, Helping People, and Weapons Repair" as Areas of Interest.

Activities

* Full-time staff advisers became members of the National Academic Advising Association (NACADA).
* Visited Virginia Gordon at Ohio State University.
* Purchased and circulated literature on developmental psychology, education, advising, and advising the undecided student.
* Held weekly staff meetings during the Winter 1987 semester.
* Developed adviser's manual.
* Participated in workshops offered by UAAC on: (A) Orientation; (B) Re-Admission; and (C) Touch-Tone Registration.
* Attended presentation on "Black Students on a Predominantly White Campus" offered through the Academic Skills Center.

Other:

* Developed colorful visual aid for use in explaining WMU degree requirements.
* Developed one-page handout of all WMU majors and minors.